

BULGARIA AND THE VATICAN

BOZHIDAR DIMITROV



**BULGARIAN
DIPLOMATIC
REVIEW**



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BULGARIA AND THE VATICAN

Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Bulgarians have recognized the Pope as Head of their Church for more than 1000 years. In Bulgaria today, how did this religious denomination appear in the Bulgarian Orthodox multitude of about 5 million people?

In 1154, when the Western Churches split, there was not a single Catholic in the Bulgarian lands. By 1204, as a result of an agreement between Tsar Caloyan and Pope Innocent III, all Bulgarians became Latin. However, in 1235, the Orthodox Christians in our country once again received the Bulgarian Patriarchate as an independent Bulgarian Orthodox Church. In 1396 Hungary conquered the principality of Vidin on the Danube, where the Hungarian monks with the assistance of their monks converted to Catholicism. About 200 members of the local population had remained, and they remained there until 1494, when a "Hungarian" and in 1793, when the Hungarian occupation forces entered the town of Vidin, where they remained until 1944. The Catholic population was reduced to 200 people. The Catholic Church in the principality of Vidin led to the Catholic Church in the principality of Vidin, where they remained until 1944.

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Bulgarian Bestseller –
National Museum of Bulgarian Books
and Polygraphy

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F o r e w o r d

Catholicism in Bulgaria

Catholics and Uniats (Orthodox Bulgarians that have recognised the Holy Pope as Head of their Church) are about 80 up to 100 thousand in Bulgaria today. How did that religious denomination appear in the Bulgarian Orthodox multitude of about 9 million people?

In 1154, when the Western Churches split, there was not a single Catholic in the Bulgarian lands. In 1204, as a result of an agreement between Tsar Caloyan and Pope Innocent III, all Bulgarians became Uniats. However, in 1235, the Orthodox Christians in our country once again restored the Bulgarian Patriarchate, i.e. an independent Bulgarian Orthodox Church. In 1366 Hungary conquered the principality of Vidin on the Danube, where the Hungarian monks with the assistance of their troops converted to Catholicism about 200 thousand of the local population. Ivan Alexander, the then Bulgarian Tsar, retaliated with a "Blitzkrieg" and in 1369 defeated the Hungarian occupation forces, restoring his son as Prince of Vidin, whereafter the 200 000 people forcefully converted to catholicism were reconverted back to the Orthodox Church, while the Hungarian monks were captured and drowned in the Danube.

The Ottoman Turks invaded these lands around the year 1396 and found an entirely Orthodox population, which was quickly conquered.

The history of present-day Catholicism in Bulgaria began in 1596, when a mendicant Franciscan monk discovered that at the town of Tchiprovtsy as well as at three of the villages nearby (Copillovtsy, Zhelezna, and Clissoura) the predominant part of the population was made of Bulgarian Catholics. We haven't got now any records as of when and how these Bulgarians became

Roman Catholics. In the past, some of our Historians voiced a hypothesis that these Catholics were the offspring of some German overlanders, or of Albanian emigrants. Recently discovered Turkish archives point out, however, that the Tchiprovtsy Catholics were not foreigners but Bulgarians, some of them of the Nobility and Royal retinue, that had accompanied Prince Frougin, the son of Tsar Ivan Shishman, in his exile to Hungary. It was there that they embraced Catholicism but then, come 1440, they returned back home after an agreement with the Turkish authorities and settled down at the town of Tchiprovtsy and the area around it.

The Vatican decided to use that small Bulgarian nest of Catholicism in order to work on for further, more solid positions within Bulgaria, which in the 1396–1878 period was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. In a comparatively short period of time hundreds of these Bulgarian Roman Catholics were given training and education at the Catholic Lyceum at Tchiprovets, as well as at the Clementine and Illyrian colleges in Italy. They headed the Catholic structures within the Bulgarian territories, where in the 1601–1647 period, schools, churches, monasteries, and nunneries were growing up as fast as mushrooms in a summer afternoon. The Bulgarian Catholic Missionaries succeeded in converting to Catholicism tens of thousands of Bulgarians within the regions of Nicopol on the Danube and Plovdiv as well. Almost all of them had been adherents to a heretic sect known as Paulikians. Catholicism in fact rescued these people for the Bulgarian nations as they were all be under the immediate threat of being converted to Islam, thus becoming Turks by nationality as well. Many Bulgarians working in service of the numerous Doubrouvnic traders were also converted to Catholicism within that period of time. The chances of Catholicism of winning a considerable part of the Bulgarians in those times were very good indeed, as the higher princes of the Orthodox clergy were predominantly Greek nationals, who led a denationalisation and Hellenisation policy, and they burdened their Orthodox flocks with enormous church taxes, tithes, etc. The Catholic priests were mostly Bulgarians, they collected no taxes or tithes, and were fervent Bulgarian patriots. Yet, they acted rashly in organising an uprising of the Bulgarian Roman Catholics against the Ottoman Turks in 1688. All the Bulgarian Catholic villages and towns were demolished to the ground, part of their population executed, others – enslaved and exiled. Some of the insurgents managed to escape, having crossed the Danube and gone North where, after many trials, they managed to settle down in the region of Banat. Their offspring nowadays numbers around 30 000 people, who live in compact minority centres within the towns of Vinga and Beshenov, as well as in several large villages. Several hundred families of them succeeded in returning back home after the liberation of Bulgaria in 1878, where they settled



Fragments from the wars of the Russian Prince Svetoslav in Bulgaria.
Illumination from the Bulgarian translation of Manassius's Chronicle, copied for the private library
of Tsar Ivan Alexander in 1345, Cod. Vat. Slav. 2, f. 183

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Fragments from the Bulgaria-Byzantium War in 811, illuminations from Manassius's Chronicle, 1345, Cod. Vat. Slav. 2, f. 145

down at several villages, – nowadays Birdarsky Gheran, Asennovo and some others. The citizens of these towns and villages are now the oldest Bulgarian Catholics there are.

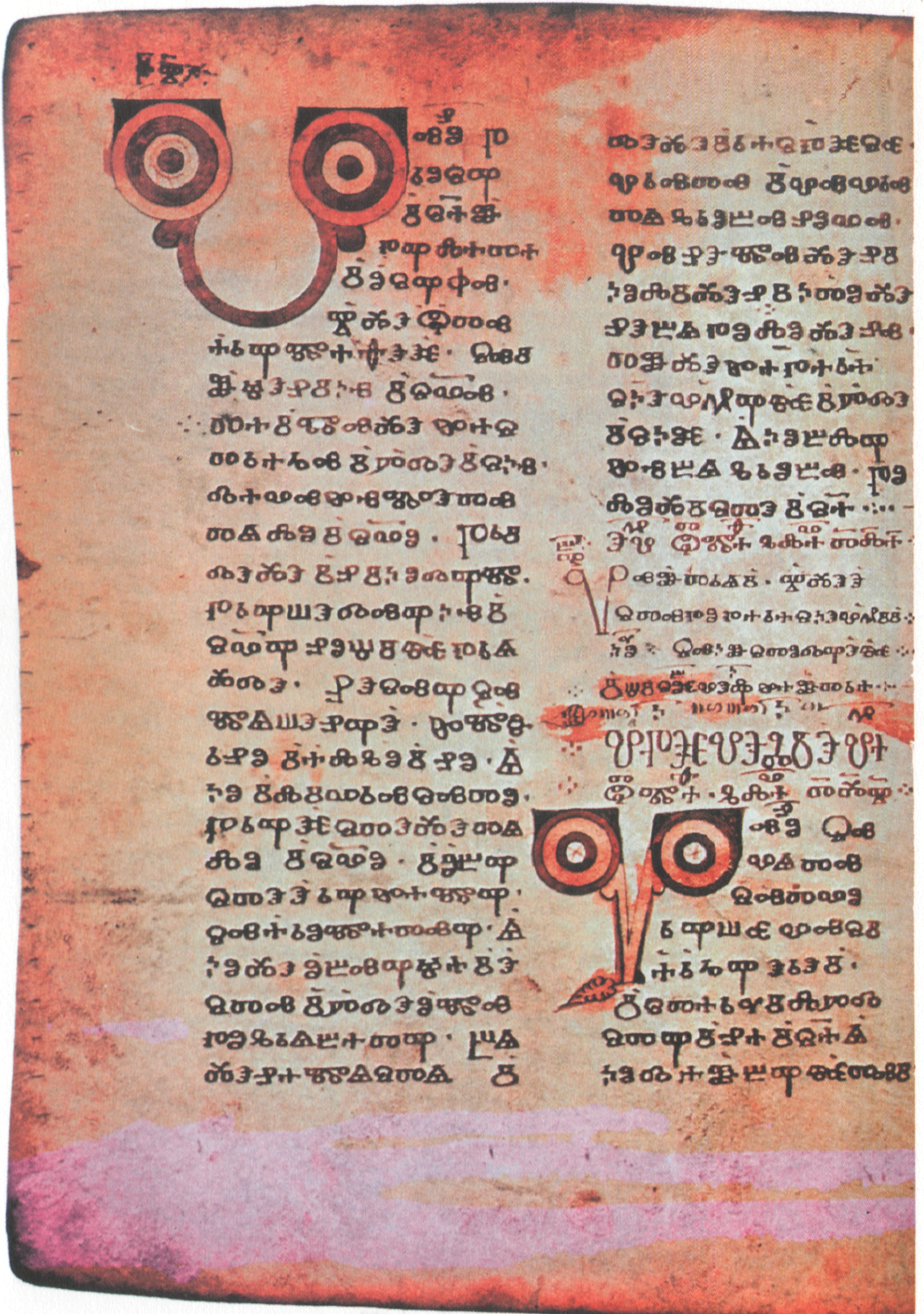
The few Catholic villages that survived after the 1688 pogroms (the villages of Oresheh, Belleh, Sekirrovo, Douvanley, General Nikolaevo, etc.) came to live through hard times. In the course of about one century they had no reliable, secure relations with the Vatican, while the appointed Bishops were mostly foreigners, who did not stay long with their flock. The Bulgarian Catholics in these villages stood up remarkably well against all hardships and succeeded in retaining their faith intact. One of the very few Bulgarian Roman Catholic priests, Mikhail Dobromirov, was tortured by the Ottoman Turks and died the death of martyr in 1738. Quite of interest are the literary activities of two other Bulgarian Catholic priests in the second half of the Eighteenth Century – Father Pavel Douvanliev and Father Peter Covatchev. Their literary works on religious topics were written in contemporary Bulgarian language.

About the mid-thirties of the Eighteenth Century the Vatican sent five Roman Catholic priests of Czech nationality to the Plovdiv Region, but they were too contemptuous and defiant toward the Turks, so they were replaced by Italians as of 1840. Thus in 1840 one of them – Right Reverend Andrea Canova – a talented administrator and organiser – headed the Sofia Diocese. The Vatican has kept that position ever since. Due to the exceedingly high birth rate observed within the Plovdiv and the Nicopol regions, the number of Catholics was also growing steadily. Some of them moved to other towns, thus shaping up several Roman Catholic communities at the towns of Plovdiv, Sofia, Rousse, Varna, Bourgas, etc. Three Catholic villages within the Plovdiv Region joined and shaped up the new town of Rakovsky, which has thus become the one and only entirely Catholic Bulgarian town. The offspring of the former population of these three villages that had survived in the 1688 pogroms, now joined into the town of Rakovsky, represent the majority of Bulgarian Roman Catholics today, their total number being about 60 000. There has never been any discord of the type of Serbian and Croatian fratricidal clashes. These Bulgarian Catholics joined the national liberation struggles, their scribes copied and distributed the History written by Paissius, the Orthodox monk (the copies are known in historic science as the “Paulikian” manuscript copies) and perished together with their Orthodox brethren for the unification of the Bulgarian lands in all the wars waged by our country. Another group of Bulgarian Christians are also administratively and religiously subjects to the Vatican. These are the Uniats. That group has come up on the historic stage in rather peculiar circumstances. The struggle and strife for an independent Bulgarian Church, led by the Bulgarian public leaders, fiercely burst out once again after the end of the Crimean War (1853–1856).

However, the Bulgarian public leaders did not find any foreign allies to assist them in finding a solution of the problem in favour of an independent Bulgarian Church. Orthodox Russia was against splitting the Christians within the Empire, and insisted that the Bulgarians had to remain under the administrative control of the Greek Ecumenical Patriarch. Under these rather unfavourable circumstances, the circle of Bulgarian Renaissance enlightenment champions around the prominent figure of their leader, Draghan Tsankov, came up with the idea of entering into a Union with the Holy Pope and the Vatican, i.e., although remaining Orthodox Christians, they recognised the Holy Pope as Head of their Church as well. On 18 December 1860 Draghan Tsankov, Joseph Socolsky and Dr. Mircovitch sent address to the Right Reverend Monsignor Brunoni, residing in Constantinople, with a request to the Holy Father to recognize the independent Bulgarian Orthodox Church and take it under his Holy Auspices. The newly-formed Uniat Church was recognized by both the Holy Pope and the Turkish Sultan. In March, 1861 the former haiduk Joseph Socolsky took the Holy Orders in Rome and became Archbishop of the Bulgarian Uniat Church.

Very soon the Uniat Church had tens of thousands of Orthodox worshippers who recognized the supremacy of the Holy Father. In Constantinople alone 15 thousand Bulgarians joined the Uniat in a few days. Entire dioceses such as the one of Polyan (Koukoush), of Malko Turnovo and others left the Patriarchate and joined the Uniat Church. Having realised his mistake and being worried about the future of the Orthodoxy in Bulgaria, the Russian Tsar ordered his diplomats to work in favour of an Independent Bulgarian Orthodox Church. And he ordered his Intelligence Service to kidnap the Right Reverend Joseph Socolsky, which they did on 5 June, 1861. Bishop Socolsky was imprisoned at the Kiev-Petchora Laura and passed away there a few years later.

The about-turn of the Russian position stopped the avalanche-like movement of the Bulgarians towards the Uniat Church. Soon an ebb-tide movement of worshippers leaving the Uniat began. That development was also strongly stimulated by the inauguration and recognition of the Independent Bulgarian Orthodox Exarchate. Several thousand Bulgarians though remained true to the Holy Pope. Nowadays there are Bulgarian Uniats not only at the larger towns but in several smaller towns and villages as well. The village of Pokrovan at the Municipality of Ivailovgrad is entirely populated by Bulgarian Uniats. Uniats too are a considerable part of the citizens of Malko Turnovo, and the people living in a number of villages in the Macedonian areas along the Vardar River.



Assemanus's Gospel, Bulgarian manuscript from the 10th century, written in the Glagolitic Alphabet (the alphabet created by St. st. Cyril and Methodius), Cod. Vat. Slav. f. 122v

Chapter One

The Beginning

In the middle of the 1st century, when Christianity started to take a grip on people's hearts, Bulgaria was within the borders of the Roman Empire and was inhabited by Thracians – one of the oldest folks on earth. The Christian faith was disseminated by St. Andrew and St. Paul, who were Christ's disciples. The Christian communities they founded multiplied over the following decades, maintaining close links with Rome, where another disciple of Christ (St. Peter) set up the administrative centre of Christians in the Roman Empire.

However, in the beginning of the 4th century the Roman Empire was split into eastern and western part and the present territory of Bulgaria fell under the church jurisdiction of the patriarchate in the capital of Constantinople. The barbarian invasions of Huns, Goths and Avars in the 4th–6th century period nearly eradicated the ancient Christian population on the Bulgarian territories. In the 6th–7th century period Slavic tribes settled down on these territories. The Slavs were pagans but the Byzantine authorities, which kept several big cities, began to gradually evangelise the newcomers.

Founded on the territory of present Ukraine, the Bulgarian state conquered the present-day mid-Bulgarian territories and located its capital there after a war with Byzantium in 681. In the next 150 years of all-out wars with Byzantium and the French Empire, Bulgaria annexed the territories of Thracia, Macedonia, as well as the ones of present Serbia and Romania. In the middle of the 9th century Bulgaria was a European superpower with a territory extending from Budapest down to Odrin, and from the estuary of Dnieper to the Albanian coast on the Adriatic.

In the 7th century Bulgarians were also pagans in their great majority. Yet, the founder of the Bulgarian state, Khan Koubrat was Christian. His successors to the throne were also Christians until 760. Probably this accounted for the inexplicable tolerance to Christians in Bulgaria in the 7th–9th century period. The number of Christians in Bulgaria increased after the annexation of the Byzantine parts of Thracia and FIROM in 821, which were populated by Slavs, christianised as a result of missionary activities. In 864 the Bulgarian Tsar Boris I accepted the Holy Baptism and proclaimed Christianity for a national religion.

With the conversion of Bulgarians to Christianity there appeared the question which centre the Bulgarian eparchies should be subordinated to. In ancient times they were under the control of the Constantinople Patriarchate. However, Tsar Boris I did not want Bulgarians to be reli-



Tetraevangelia of Father Nickodim – Slavic manuscript written in the Cyrillic Alphabet, 14th century, Cod. Vat. Slav. 5 f. 5

giously subjected to the Patriarchate, which was totally dependent on the secular authorities in Byzantium – the main rival of Bulgaria. Therefore, Bulgarian messengers were sent to Rome in 866. On 29 August Pope Nikolay I received the Bulgarian boyars Peter, Yoan and Marin, who had brought the Pope a list of 116 questions regarding Bulgarian customs. Tsar Boris I needed to know to what an extent they did not contradict Christian norms. Leaving the questions aside, the mission itself implied that the Bulgarian tsar recognised the Pope as the supreme authority and unambiguously expressed his readiness to subordinate Bulgarian Christians to Rome.

On 13 November 866 Pope Nikolay I solemnly handed over the answers to the questions of Tsar Boris I. A church mission headed by bishop Formoza Portuenski left for Bulgaria along with the Bulgarian messengers. The mission also included the bishops Paul Populonski and Donat Ostiiski, as well as the presbyter Leo and the apostolic deacon Marin. The papal messengers to Bulgaria embarked on a wide-range missionary activities in Bulgaria – they preached Christianity, built churches, etc. It is believed that the biggest church in Europe in that epoch – the 99-metre-long and 30-metre-wide Big Basilica in the then Bulgarian capital of Pliska, was built exactly in this epoch by bishop Formoza Portuenski, who was Pope in the 891–896 period.

With the second group of messengers, including the boyars Peter, Georgi Sondoke and Stasis, Tsar Boris I asked the Pope to appoint Formoza Portuenski Bulgarian bishop, as well as to send other priests to preach the religion to the Bulgarian people. This meant that Bulgaria was religiously subordinated to Rome. Yet, for reasons unknown to anyone, the Pope declined that appointment and suggested that Tsar Boris I should choose among bishop Paul Populonski and the newly-sent bishops Dominik Trivenski and Grimoald Polimartiiski. Pope Nikolay I died before the Bulgarian messengers set off for their home country. However, the new Pope Adrian II also rejected the choice of Tsar Boris I. Moreover, he insisted that the old missionaries should return to Rome. In February 868 the boyar Peter together with the bishops Formoza and Paul Populonski came back to Rome for the third time, bringing a letter from Tsar Boris I, in which he requested the appointment of the deacon Marin or of a cardinal of the Roman church as archbishop of Bulgaria. Obviously, the tsar felt strongly about the Bulgarian head of church being either a clergyman he had already become familiar with or a high-ranking person fit for the country he ruled.

Yet, the Pope did not agree to that and started a totally pointless battle for prestige in papal-caesarian vein. He sent Boris the too low-ranking assistant deacon Sylvester with a recommendation that "he should be chosen by the Bulgarians". Shortly after his arrival in Pliska, the bishop was sent back to Rome with the bishops Leopard Aikonski and Dominik Trivenski. They carried a letter from Boris I where he tersely requested that the Pope should appoint "bishop Famoza or deacon Marin" as Bulgarian archbishop. Pope Adrian appeared to have realised that he was on his way to lose Bulgaria and replied with a long letter saying that "he would send anyone Boris has chosen but bishop Famoza and deacon Marin". The proud Bulgarian tsar looked for another solution. At the Ecumenical Council held in Constantinople from 5 October 869 to 28 February 870, a decision was made at the last sitting to subordinate the Bulgarian eparchies to the Constantinople Patriarchate. The papal messengers' attempts to protest by pointing out that Bulgaria was under the church authority of the Vatican were futile. Presenting bishop Grimoald Polimartiiski with rich gifts, Tsar Boris I sent him back to Rome with all other Roman priests.

Rome blamed Constantinople for subordinating Bulgaria to its jurisdiction so the good relations with Bulgaria were preserved. Pope John VIII made a second attempt to attract Bulgaria. He sent Tsar Boris several letters, insisting on the supremacy of Rome over all other patriarchs and claimed that according to "the old books" Bulgaria belonged to the Vatican. The Bulgarian tsar replied that he was obliged to adhere to the decision of the Ecumenical Council. Probably this was also the reason why at the Ecumenical Council held in Constantinople from 879 to 880, the papal messengers brought up the question about the jurisdiction of the Bulgarian eparchies again. After a number of disputes, a decision was made that the names of the Bulgarian bishops should not be entered in the eparchy lists of the Constantinople Patriarchate unless they were handed over to Rome as well. Practically speaking, this meant full independence of the Bulgarian church. That was how the decision had been interpreted in Rome and Pope John II decided to restore the relations with Bulgaria. Through the medium of the Croatian bishop Theodosius Ninski, who met Tsar Boris I in 881, the Pope showed his willingness to welcome Bulgarian messengers. However, the Bulgarian messengers sent to Rome arrived not until after his death in 882. From that moment on there was no evidence of active contacts between the Vatican and Bulgaria for many decades.

The close contacts between Rome and Bulgaria in the 866–882 period played an important role for the development of Bulgaria. The Bulgarian Christians gained a solid support as a result of the papal missionaries' hard work among the newly converted folk. Bulgaria became part of the European political space and a desired partner in international relations. Yet, "the struggle" for Bulgaria between the two administrative centres of Christianity (Rome and Constantinople) had an outcome which was probably unexpected for them but it was certainly welcomed by the Bulgarian tsar – the de facto independent ruling of the Bulgarian Archbishopric. It was to be legalised in 917, when it was transformed into Patriarchate.



ѿ ЖѢСѢИСТЫЕ ѿ ЕВѢНГІЕ НАГО
 ЖЫТІЯ ЧТНАГО ПРѢЧЕ НІ КРѢТІА
 ІОАННА. НАѢРГІН. ГЛАВА. А.

ОНѢ ЖЕ ОУБѢЛНОЗЫ НАЧЕШЕ ЧНН
 ТН ПОВѢСТЬ. ѿНЗВѢСТВОВАНЫХ
 ВНАСѢ ВЕЩЕХЪ. ІАКО ЖЕ ПРѢДАШЕ
 НАМЪ ИЖЕ НСПРѢВА СЛОВО ИДЦН
 И СЛОУГЫ БЫВШЕ И СЛОВЕСН. ИЗВО
 ЛСЕ ИМѢ ПАСЛѢДОВАВШОУ ВЫШЕ
 ВЪСѢХЪ ИСПЫТНО. ПОРЕДОУТЕБѢ

Chapter Two

The Vatican and the Saints Cyril and Methodius

In the second half of the Ninth Century the Vatican was remarkably committed to initiating and promoting a Bulgarian alphabet and literacy as the canonical language in church ministry. The Bulgarian alphabet was compiled by Constantine-Cyril and his brother Methodius. The brothers were born at the city of Thessaloniki and grew up in the family of a high-ranking civil servant of the Eastern Roman Empire – Byzantium. Their father was Deputy-Governor of the city, which used to be the second largest one of the Empire in those times.

The ethnic origin of the two brothers is not explicitly mentioned in any contemporary sources. Later-on church hagiographies dating back to the eleventh-fifteenth centuries stated the brothers were Bulgarians, or that their Mother was Bulgarian. There is also some indirect evidence of that.

In one of the hagiographies of Constantine-Cyril, for instance, it was mentioned that his grandfather was of aristocratic origin, of the Royal retinue, who, due to court intrigue, had been forced to move to Byzantium. The only existing Slavonic state in those times was Bulgaria, which in the second half of the eighth century was actually shaken by dynastic struggles. Dozens of noblemen (two sovereigns among them) lost the political in-fighting and emigrated to Byzantium in the 759–792 period, where they found recognition among the nobility and warlords. The second, more reliable piece of evidence that Cyril and Methodius were Bulgarians was the fact that the two brothers had an outstanding command of the Bulgarian language, thus having been able to not only compile an alphabet suiting to perfection the phonetic specifics of the Bulgarian language but also to translate the difficult texts of the Holy Gospel and the liturgical books. They had to resort to coining new words for the abstract theological terms that did not exist in the then spoken Slav language – and that could not have been done without a truly perfect command of the language. And in those times, neither the educational system, nor the learned community could have allowed the two brothers to learn the Slav language had they been foreigners.

Cyril and Methodius were born in the years 827 and 815, respectively. The secular name of Cyril was Constantine. The secular name of Methodius is not registered by any contemporary source. According to some later dated sources, such as the *Chronicle of the Seventeenth Century*, written in Italian and kept at the Borgiano Latini Fund of the Vatican's Apostolic Library, his secular name was Strakhota, i.e. an ancient Slavonic name.

Б

БѢЗЪ

ЧНАХЪ ХОТЕЩИХЪ ТРОБИТИ СССС

КЪ: РЕ: ЯНЪАН С ХОДЕНІЕМЪ ТАКЕ
ЗДАНН ПРІЗЪМЪННХЪ ОУЗНХЪ И
ОРТЪНУННХЪ ОВРАТНХЪ



ДНЕТИ ЧНАХЪ КЪ СТРОБИТИ И КИ
ДНХЪЗ КИЗЛО СЫКСЕ ПЯДЫШО
НАЗЕМЛО И ДАЧЕ БН ЕН КЛОУБ
СТОУДСЕНЬЦА БЕЗДЕН ЧКО НЪВ
ДЪСЕ СТОДЕНЦЪ И КЪЗНДЕДНМЪС
ХОДЕНЦА ЕКОДНМЪ ПЕЩН КЕЛНН
ЕХУРЮЩН НОМЪРЪУЕЗЕМЛЯ И СЛЫН
ЦЕ И ЧНЕРЪ ОДНМЪ СТОДЕНЬУННЪ
КО НОДНМЪ ИЗНАОТЬ ПРЮЗН НАЗЕ
МЛО И ДАЧЕ БН НМЪ ОБЯСЪЕ КО
ЖЕ НМОТЬ ОБЯСЪ СКОРЪПНЕЗЕМ
ЛННН ПРХЕНО БН НМЪ ДАЧЕДЕТЪ

They both studied at the Maghnaur School in Constantinople. Having graduated from this mediaeval University, Methodius was appointed Governor of a Slav Principality – a semi-autonomous formation of an unknown in name Slav tribe that lived on the territory of Byzantium. In the year 851 though, Methodius resigned this office and took the vows of a monk. Some mediaevalists, among whom prof. I. Douytchev, attempted explaining the resignation of office with a separatist uprising in the autonomous principality ruled by Methodius, and its annexation to the Bulgarian Kingdom.

Constantine showed good scholastic aptitude while still in his early teens. He studied Grammar, Geometry, Dialectics, Philosophy, Rhetorics, Arithmetics, Astronomy, Music. In the year 850 he became lecturer at the Maghnaur School. Together with his teacher, Patriarch Photius, he took part in a political mission to the Arabs in 854 AD. The following year he retired from life in the Metropolis and took the vows of a monk at the St Polychronos Monastery at Mount Olympus in Asia Minor, where his brother had already moved to.

The retirement of the two brothers has been explained with their work on compiling the Slavonic-Bulgarian alphabet by both the contemporary sources and modern research workers. This immediately poses the question of the motivation of the two brothers that might have made them do the job. The sources were unanimous – the burning desire of Cyril and Methodius to spread the Gospel among the Slavs as quickly as possible. In those times the Slavs occupied two-thirds of Europe – practically all the land from the River Elbe to the Ural Mountains, as well as from the Baltic Sea down to the Aegean and the Adriatic. A very small part of them had been converted to Gospel Faith – mostly those who used to live in the eastern lands of the Frank Empire and those in Byzantium. Experience had shown that knowing no Latin or Greek, Slavs could not get to know Christianity well enough. However, in that epoch the so-called “tri-lingual dogma” was the law. It stipulated that the Christian Faith be practised in Hebrew, Greek or Latin only.

And it is here that scholars face the question – whether the task of Cyril and Methodius was an independent enterprise by zealous Christians, who wanted to convert to Christianity the countless Slav masses of Europe albeit at the price of breaching a dogma or it was a political task. Byzantium had never been an ardent follower of the tri-lingual dogma (it should be remembered the practices of Caesarean Papism

were prevalent there), so political consideration had often caused breaching it in the past. Georgians and Armenians, also Copts and Ethiopians witnessed to the Lord in their own languages and had letters of their own although they were part of the Empire. The Holy Gospel was translated by St. Nikitta of Remessiah in the language of Thracians within the Balkan territory of the Empire in the Fifth Century. Bishop Wulfilla did the same into the language of the German Goths. That must have been well known to the Thessaloniki brothers. Yet, it is possible that the compilation of the Slav-Bulgarian alphabet was ordered by the Byzantine Emperor as an eventual version of counteraction against the Bulgarian Tsar Boris I, who had already made it known he wanted to convert his country to the Christian Faith. Slavs in Byzantium proper had adopted Christianity quite some time before, while ministering church services in Greek had already been a century-old tradition, thus almost all the Byzantine Slavs had adopted worshipping the Lord in Greek as of the times of Cyril and Methodius. Yet, that thesis seems of little credibility as the firm resolution of Byzantium to have church services ministered throughout Bulgaria in the Greek language was quite well known at the time. The later-on transition from Greek into Bulgarian in the Church practices would spark off the war of 893 between the two states.

Thus the conjectures of some scholars that the Slav-Bulgarian alphabet must have been compiled on direct orders by the Bulgarian Tsar Boris I seem much more acceptable. The two brothers were obviously in regular contacts with the Bulgarian Tsar. Undoubtedly, Tsar Boris I understood the necessity of spreading the Gospel among the Bulgarian people for considerations related both to foreign as well as to home policy issues, yet he feared a possible erosion of national identity if Greek was adopted by the Church and the administration throughout the country. As different from Byzantium and the Roman Empire, built on the principles of Christian universalism, Bulgaria was structured on the principle of a uni-national state. Cyril and Methodius most likely expressed willingness to help a Tsar – their own countryman, so they undertook the task of providing a canonical recognition of the Bulgarian alphabet, too. Their wide connections and their status within the Byzantine clerical and political elite made it quite possible for them to accomplish that task.

A confirmation of the above opinion may be found in the text of the so-called Concise Hagiography of St. Cyril, which says that he and his brother, having compiled the alphabet and completed the translation of

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БНІТЬ ДЧНІ НЧНБС
ХЪ МНЧНЛ НЧНІАНЕГО
БДЧНІ СЛТКОРНШЕ СІЗМН
ЕМЪ НІ МНН БДЧСЕ НЧНІ
АНЕГО НЕ ВЪ МОГУТІ НМНІ
ТО НЕ ОБДНТЕ СЕ НМБ НЧНБ
БЕСБ КННЗЛАЖЕНБ БНІ МНН
ВЕАНІКН НІ МНН ДДІКНН НЧ
ДНЦЧЕТІЕ ДІЕ ВОПБ НСОТОН
Ч ЛСТЕН КАСЕЛЕНО КСО КЛМОЖ
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БННМЪ ОЛОЖЕНН БШЕ НБНСТІ ГЛЧ
СБВЕАН НЧНБІН ГЛЕ НННБ БН СПСЕ
ННБ НСНЛЧ НЦДЫТКО БЧ НЧШЕГОН
ОБЛЧСТІ НЧЧЕГОТКО НКІ МОЖЕНБ

the Holy Gospel, went to the lands along the Breghalnitsa River (the region is in the present-day eastern part of the Republic of Macedonia, but in the Ninth Century it was part of the Bulgarian Kingdom). According to the Concise Hagiography, the two brothers converted 54 000 Bulgarians to the Gospel Faith. That mission of the brothers in the valley of the Breghalnitsa points to an interesting coincidence with a fact from another source which says that Tsar Boris I had had his own Holy Baptism at the regional centre of Rahven, a town in the valley of the self-same Breghalnitsa River.

At the end of the year 860 AD. Cyril and Methodius returned to Constantinople and in the next two years went on two important diplomatic missions (at the order of the Emperor of Byzantium) to the tribes of the Khazars, and the Alans. At the end of 861 they returned to Constantinople. Cyril remained there as lecturer at the Magnaur School, while Methodius went back to the St. Polychronos Monastery.

In 862 AD. Prince Rostislav of Moravia asked the Byzantine Emperor to find him "a bishop and a teacher who would explain us the Christian Faith in our own language". The Emperor and Patriarch Photius delegated the Cyril and Methodius brothers, thus the Patriarch had evidently made it clear he recognized the Slav-Bulgarian alphabet as canonical. The brothers worked in Moravia for nearly three years, training hundreds of students to officiate in church ministry and liturgical services in the Slav language. The German priest, who had been spreading the Holy Gospel in Moravia for the preceding decades, reacted sharply to Divine service being officiated in a Slav language.

In the spring of 867, passing through Venice on their way to Constantinople, the two brothers took part in a theological discussion and brilliantly defended their cause against the accusations of the adherents to the trilingual heresy. "Does not the Almighty send rain in equity to all? Does not the Sun shine in equity for all of us? Are you not ashamed to set three languages only, as if you wanted all other peoples to remain blind and deaf?" said Cyril.

After that dispute, Pope Nicolay, who had already been in touch with Tsar Boris I, invited the two brothers to come and report to the Vatican, as they had been preaching within a Papal Diocese. Cyril and Methodius took from Constantinople the relics of the Third Pope, St. Clement of Rome, who was tortured and died the death of a martyr at the Black Sea port of Kherson. They had discovered the relics of the saint while on their

mission to the Khazars. On their arrival to Rome, they were received with a lot of pomp by Pope Adrian II. At the church of St. Maria Fatan Pope Adrian II consecrated the Slav-Bulgarian liturgical books, thus recognizing the new letters as canonical. That turned out to be an extremely valuable support, as the Vatican was indisputably the highest authority in church matters throughout Europe. The role of Tsar Boris I in this obvious breach of the trilingual dogma was passed over in silence by the sources, but it was quite evident that the act had come as a consequence of his wishes.

In confirmation of this supposition comes the fact that it was the very Bishop Formosa of Portuen, who had just returned from Bulgaria, that ordained some of the pupils of the two brothers (Clement, Naum and Anghelarius) as priests. Their hagiographies explicitly state they were born in Bulgaria. Most probably Bishop Formosa had been preparing to introduce Divine service in the native language throughout Bulgaria according to the wishes of Tsar Boris I, who maybe exactly for this reason had repeatedly insisted that Bishop Formosa was to be appointed Bishop of the Bulgarian Diocese.

While in Rome though, Cyril fell seriously ill and passed away on 4 February 869. Pope Adrian II had him buried at the church of St Clemente. His tomb has continued enjoying the deep respect and veneration of Bulgarians up to this day.

In the meantime the princes of the Slav principalities and other state formations within the basin of the Mid Danube had asked Pope Adrian II to ordain Methodius as Archbishop of Panonia. The Pope satisfied their request at the end of the year 869. The town of Sirmium (Srem), which was located within the then territories of the Bulgarian Kingdom, was declared as seat of the Diocese. The Panonia Diocese included areas of the present-day territories of Hungary, Slovakia, parts of Austria, Croatia and the Czech Republic. Supposedly not wanting to demonstrate too openly his ties with the Bulgarian Tsar, Methodius resided outside of the Bulgarian territory.

The further fate of Archbishop Methodius was a string of efforts to reaffirm and solidify the positions of liturgical church service and officiating in Slavonic-Bulgarian, as well as bitter suffering caused by the German clergy, adherents of the trilingual dogma. In November 870 Methodius was arrested at the clerical convention held in Regensburg, then convicted and imprisoned at the Monastery of Elwangen. Pope John VIII resolutely intervened, and in May 873 petitioned the German Tsar

СНЕМЪ ДАМЪ ЕЕ ЧЕЛВУДАНТЪ
НСТННА НСХМЪ ЕЕ ДАНО



Thomas
Rex cepit
regnare
11443.

Hos libros scribit Radosaw Christianus
Gonsawo Christiano et scriptum fuit dictus
Dni Regis Thomae et Aui Ratko. Dni, si alii
quid male posui nolite deridere, quia pure mihi
manus lasse labore. Legite et benedicite, vos au-
tem deus benedicat in seculum.



Map of the Mediterranean Sea made by Jehuda ben Zara, 1497, Borgiano VII

Carlomann to set Archbishop Methodius free, so that he “could freely discharge his Episcopal functions”. And in his letters to the Bishop of Passau, Right Reverend Hermenrih, Pope John VIII wrote: “... indeed, whose cruelty... whose brutality had you not surpassed... by subjecting our Brother Methodius to penal imprisonment.” Pope John VIII had imposed a prohibition to officiate Divine services to all the Royal Bishops until Methodius had not been released from prison. An emissary appointed to arrange the release of Methodius was Bishop Paul of Ancona – another former missionary to Bulgaria.

Released in September 873, Methodius was appointed Archbishop of Moravia with the seat of the bishopric at the town of Velegrad. In 879 Pope John VIII was once again forced to confirm with a Papal Decree (a Bull) the canonical nature of the Slav-Bulgarian language. Intrigues led Archbishop Methodius to face a Papal Tribunal at the Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul in the year 880, where he pleaded a brilliant defence of his cause. The intrigues went on, nevertheless, but Pope John VIII once again defended Methodius in the years 880 and 881.

Archbishop Methodius passed away on 6 April 885, and was buried at the Cathedral of Velegrad. His funeral service was officiated in the Latin, Greek and Bulgarian languages.

After the demise of Methodius, the German clergy quickly rose on top and put an end to the Divine service being officiated in Slavonic Bulgarian within the Slavonic principalities along the Danube. The cause of Cyril and Methodius did not perish, however. Their Bulgarian disciples (Clement, Naum, Anghelarius and others) returned to Bulgaria in the 886–887 period and generously supported by Tsar Boris I, Clement and Naum set up several theological schools at the towns of Pliska and Ohrid, where in the next seven years they succeeded in training thousands of priests to officiate in the Slav-Bulgarian language. They also organised scores of scribes to copy tens of thousands of liturgical books, thus allowing the Bulgarian Tsar Simeon the Great (893–927), the son of Tsar Boris I, to declare the Slav-Bulgarian language official for the Bulgarian Church and State. Bulgarian missionaries in the next century disseminated Christianity throughout the vast areas populated by Slavs – from the Adriatic and the Aegean seas up to the North Sea, and from the Carpathian Mountains up to the Urals. Today this is the alphabet of the liturgical books used to glorify the Lord by the peoples of Bulgaria, Russia, Serbia, FIROM, Montenegro, Ukraine, Bielaruss and Moldova, a

total of nearly 300 million people.

The success of the Slav-Bulgarian language, compiled by Cyril and Methodius, in spreading the Holy Gospel and in officiating liturgical service of the southern and eastern Slavs in the IX–X centuries would not have been possible without the powerful support of the Vatican, especially Pope Adrian II and Pope John VIII who had several times declared the language canonical at an early stage of its existence. That is one of the reasons why the Bulgarian people, who celebrate the 24th of May (the Church holiday dedicated to the two brothers, canonised as saints by both the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox churches) as a national holiday, gloriously rejoiced in 1979 at the news that the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II had declared the Saints Cyril and Methodius patrons of Europe.

Chapter Four

The Uniat between 1204–1235

82

8

Data pointing to contacts between Bulgaria and the Vatican in the late Tenth and early Eleventh centuries have neither been found in the Bulgarian records nor in the papal ones. In those times Bulgaria was engaged in prolonged wars with Byzantium in pursuit of hegemony on the Balkans. In 917 the Bulgarian autocephalous archbishopric was elevated to patriarchate by the Bulgarian Tsar Simeon the Great (893–927). Its statute was acknowledged by the Constantinople Patriarchate in 927. It seems inconceivable that Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Church did not maintain any relations with Rome even though they had a common rival at that time. Yet all the sources have remained silent as to that. It is true that one of Pope Innocent's letters of the early 13 c. to the Bulgarian Tsar Caloyan says that the papal registers contained documents confirming the fact that the Bulgarian tsars in the 9th–11th centuries period had received a crown from the Vatican. The names of Simeon I (893–927) and Samuil (997–1014) were explicitly mentioned. Bearing in mind that two of these kings were in constant military conflict with Constantinople, they are very likely to have sought international prestige for the their reign through a crown handed over by the Vatican.

In 1018 Bulgaria was conquered by the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) as a result of a 50-year-long war. In 1019–1020 the Byzantine Emperor Basilius II settled the statute of the Bulgarian Christians by means of three decrees. The Bulgarian Patriarchate was downgraded to an archbishopric, but it kept its independence from Constantinople. The archbishop was chosen by the bishops of the Bulgarian Bishoprics and was consequently appointed by the Emperor. The autocephalous area was called Bulgarian Archbishopric. The town of Ohrid was its seat, whereas its archbishop signed his name as "Archbishop of Ohrid and of All Bulgaria". This church institution subsequently extended the borders of its influence to come to include patriarchates in Wallachia, Serbia and even in southern Italy. However, as an institution directly subordinated to the Byzantine Emperor, it did not maintain contacts with the Vatican in the 11th and 12th centuries. I will only remind the reader that exactly within that period the relations between Rome and Constantinople were at their lowest and in 1054 a schism was declared.

In 1185 an uprising broke out in the Bulgarian lands, led by the three brothers Assen, Theodore (Peter) and Caloyan, who came from an aristocratic family akin to the old Bulgarian dynasties. The brothers pro-

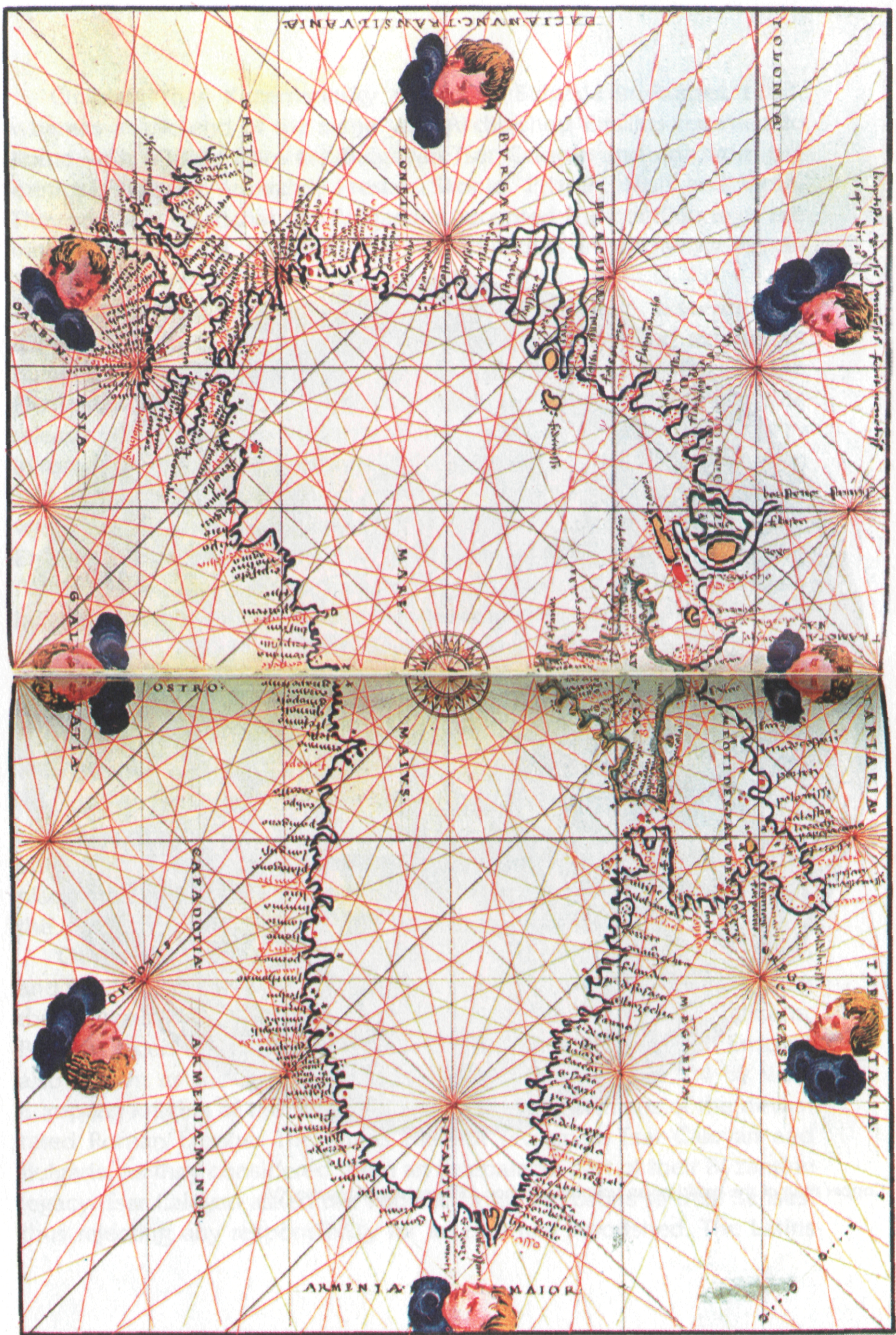
claimed the restoration of the old Bulgarian State and in the wake of a 12-year-long war they liberated the territories of Moesia, Thrace and Wallachia, all of them inhabited entirely by Bulgarians. In 1197 the brothers Assen and Theodore (Peter) were already dead and Caloyan had ascended the Bulgarian Throne. The war with Byzantium, which had naturally refused to recognise Bulgaria's independence, went on. Yet, Caloyan was not recognised as the lawful Tsar even by the rulers of the neighbouring countries Hungary and Serbia. Therefore, the Bulgarian Tsar made a decision to approach the Vatican, requesting to be crowned as Tsar of the Bulgarians. In those times, this was the right step to ensure international recognition of Bulgaria's independence.

It seems that as early as 1197–1198 Tsar Caloyan had sent messengers with a letter to the Pope, but they did not manage to reach Rome, as they were probably detained by Byzantine detachments while attempting to cross the Adriatic – the same had happened to other Bulgarian messengers later on. However, Pope Innocent III found out about the Bulgarian attempts to establish contacts and in 1199 succeeded in sending a letter of his own to the Bulgarian Tsar. The Holy Throne and some senior Bulgarian statesmen and clergymen started an interesting correspondence, which led to a union between the Bulgarian and the Roman Catholic churches.

In his first letter brought by Archipresbyter Dominic, Pope Innocent III made a wide-ranging historical review on the relations between Rome and Bulgaria and in the way of flattery stated that the Bulgarian Ruler had descended from Rome.

Following several futile attempts, as he himself wrote, Tsar Caloyan's reply to Rome had not arrived until the beginning of November 1202. The letter was delivered by archipresbyter Dominic and Bishop Basil of the Bulgarian town of Branitchevo. They had also brought a letter from the Bulgarian Patriarch Basilius, who modestly wrote about himself as "Archbishop of Zaghora".

Tsar Caloyan, who considered himself "a dear son of our Mother – the Roman Catholic Church", requested in his letter "a crown and dignity" from the Vatican. He also hinted that in return it would be his honour to subordinate the Bulgarian Church to the Vatican. Pope Innocent sent back a prompt reply as early as 27 November 1202. Along with the pallium brought by chaplain Yoan Kazemarinsky for the Bulgarian Archbishop, he also urged the Bulgarian Ruler to provide evidence of his allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church.



Map of the Black Sea with the Bulgarian ports from the atlas of Batista Agnese, Cod. Palat. Lat., f. 11v.–12



Copper map of the world by an unknown author, 15th century, Borgiano XVI

Chaplain Yoan Kazemarinsky arrived to Bulgaria in August 1203, whereas at the end of the same year Archbishop Basilius returned to Rome with a letter from the Bulgarian Tsar Caloyan and one from the metropolitans of Velbuzhd, Preslav, Skopje, Prizren, Nish and Vidin. They made it clear that the Bulgarians accepted the conditions of the Vatican for a union between the two churches in exchange for an "Imperial Crown" for the Bulgarian Ruler.

Provided with formal letters, papal decrees, a crown, a sceptre and a military flag, the senior papal messenger Cardinal Leo set off for Bulgaria by land in March 1204. He was apprehended, however, by the Hungarian King Emmerich, who stated that the Cardinal would only be released if he promised to act as an intermediary on behalf of Hungary in resolving the Bulgarian-Hungarian territorial disputes. King Emmerich and Pope Innocent exchanged a few letters where the Pope took sides with the Bulgarians. For instance, Pope Innocent III declined King Emmerich's allegations that Tsar Caloyan was not a rightful ruler. The Pope stressed that Caloyan had restored a country that had been ruled by his ancestors and constituted his patrimony.

Eventually, King Emmerich let Cardinal Leo proceed on his journey to Bulgaria. On 8 November 1204 Cardinal Leo solemnly laid the papal crown on the head of the Bulgarian Tsar in Turnovo, the then capital of the Kingdom of Bulgaria. In the papal decree Caloyan was honoured with the title of "rex", i.e. king. The Bulgarian Archbishop received the title of Primus. Pope Innocent dispatched letters to the Serbian and Hungarian kings, notifying them that the Bulgarians were converted to Catholicism. In effect, the Bulgarian diocese had only formally recognised the supremacy of the Vatican. Nothing changed in the rituals and the domestic church life in the Bulgarian lands.

Over the next few years the Vatican and the Bulgarian Tsar Caloyan and Boril (1207–1218) actively co-operated in the political conflicts on the Balkans. After settling the disagreements with the Hungarians, Bulgaria faced a new problem – the confrontation of the Latin Empire, also known as the Holy Roman Empire, established in 1204 by west European knights of the Fourth Crusade upon the remains of the devastated Roman Empire. The Latins did not recognise Tsar Caloyan and Bulgaria, as they considered them an inseparable part of their Byzantine legacy. Tsar Caloyan asked the Pope to bring the Latins to their senses, thus rejecting any responsibility for an eventual bloodshed. The Latins

did not take Pope Innocent's advice to peacefully come to terms with the Bulgarians. In 1205 a war broke out between the Bulgarians and the Latins and in several successive battles (near Adrianopol, Rusion, etc.) the Bulgarians defeated the knights, including their leaders – Emperor Baldwin of Flanders, Bonifacius of Monferrat, Enrico Donaldo, etc. The Pope managed to achieve peace only in about 1214.

The uniat between the Vatican and Bulgaria lasted until 1235, when due to political reasons the Bulgarian Tsar Ivan Assen II accepted the Byzantine Patriarch's proposal to recognise the patriarchal dignity of the Bulgarian church. The good political relations between the Bulgarian Royal Court and the Vatican remained until the end of the medieval Bulgarian state of 1396. The papal archives have preserved only a few letters from this period, full of pleasantries on various occasions.

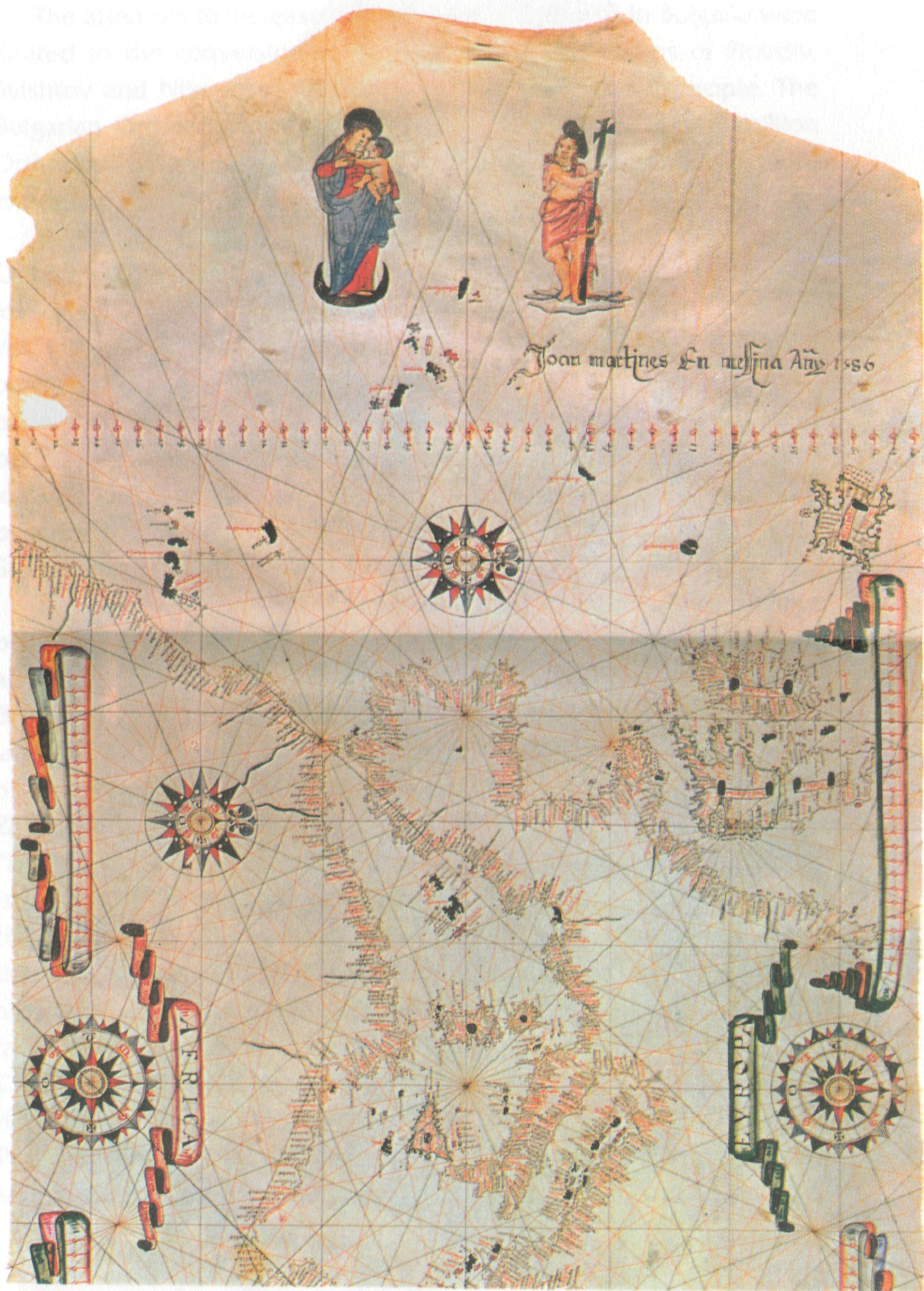
Politically, the uniat of 1204 to 1235 was particularly beneficial for Bulgaria. The state succeeded in gaining the desired international legitimacy and resolving some serious foreign-political problems to its own advantage.

Chapter Four

The Heyday of Catholicism in Bulgaria in the 17th Century

After the end of the uniatic in 1235, Bulgaria and the Vatican maintained good formal relations on a state level until the conquest of our lands by the Turkish Empire in 1396. The renewed contacts between the Vatican and the Bulgarians came into existence exactly 200 years later on. In 1596 the Franciscan monk Peter Solinat, while traversing the Balkans, came across 300 Bulgarian Catholic families in the small town of Chiprovets (nowadays called Chiprovtsi), notified the Pope of that fact through a letter and settled down as a papal vicar there. Even nowadays scholars cannot reach an agreement as to how this nest of Catholics had emerged in the Orthodox Bulgarian sea. Some of them believe these were Saxon miners who had moved to Bulgaria, others regard them as Albanian settlers. Yet, their purely Bulgarian names as well as some other recent findings have given rise to another hypothesis – the inhabitants of Chiprovtsi were descendants of the Bulgarian noblemen who had accompanied the regent descendants Constantine and Frougin to Hungary. There they had embraced Catholicism and, after the futile liberation attempts of Ivan Stratsimir and Ivan Shishman's sons, they had returned to Chiprovtsi on an agreement with the Turkish authorities.

The Vatican became interested in extending its presence on the Bulgarian lands so Pope Clement VIII restored the Sofia-based Catholic bishopric and appointed Peter Solimat its leader. Prior to building a new church, Peter Solinat erected a school. Several gifted children were annually sent to colleges and universities in Rome and Italy. Every year the Vatican granted six scholarships for Bulgarian children to study in Italy. Thanks to these practices the Bulgarian nation quickly got hold of highly educated intellectuals mastering a few foreign languages each and having significant relations in Europe. The Orthodox Bulgarians, whose social makeup then primarily consisted of "diggers and ploughmen" as Paissiy of Chilandar had figuratively put it, were deprived of this type of natural leader until the early 19th century. Following Peter Solinat, the Vatican appointed only Bulgarians as leaders of the Sofia bishopric – Ilia Marinov, Peter Bogdan, Stefan Kiezhevich.



Map of the Mediterranean Sea made by Juan Martines in 1586, Borgiano X



Map of the Mediterranean Sea made by an unknown author, 16th century, Borgiano XI

The attempts to increase the numbers of Catholics in Bulgaria were limited to the conversion of the heretics in the regions of Plovdiv, Svishtov and Nikopol to Catholicism – all in all 10,000 people. The Bulgarian Catholics humbly wrote to the Vatican that the 2 million Orthodox Bulgarians were staunch in their faith and therefore extremely reluctant to embrace Catholicism.

This is not quite true though. The fact was that the Bulgarian Catholics, educated by the Vatican itself to be ardently patriotic, opted for something else. To be more precise – for the liberation of Bulgaria. Yet, feeling apprehensive that the small Bulgarian community would be eradicated as a result of possible Turkish repression, the Papacy forbade them to get involved in any political activities. The situation became unbearable for the Bulgarians and from 1630 onwards the leadership in the Bulgarian Catholic structures was gradually taken over by the generation of Peter Bogdan, Peter Parchevich, Phillip Stanislavov, Franchesko Soimirovich.

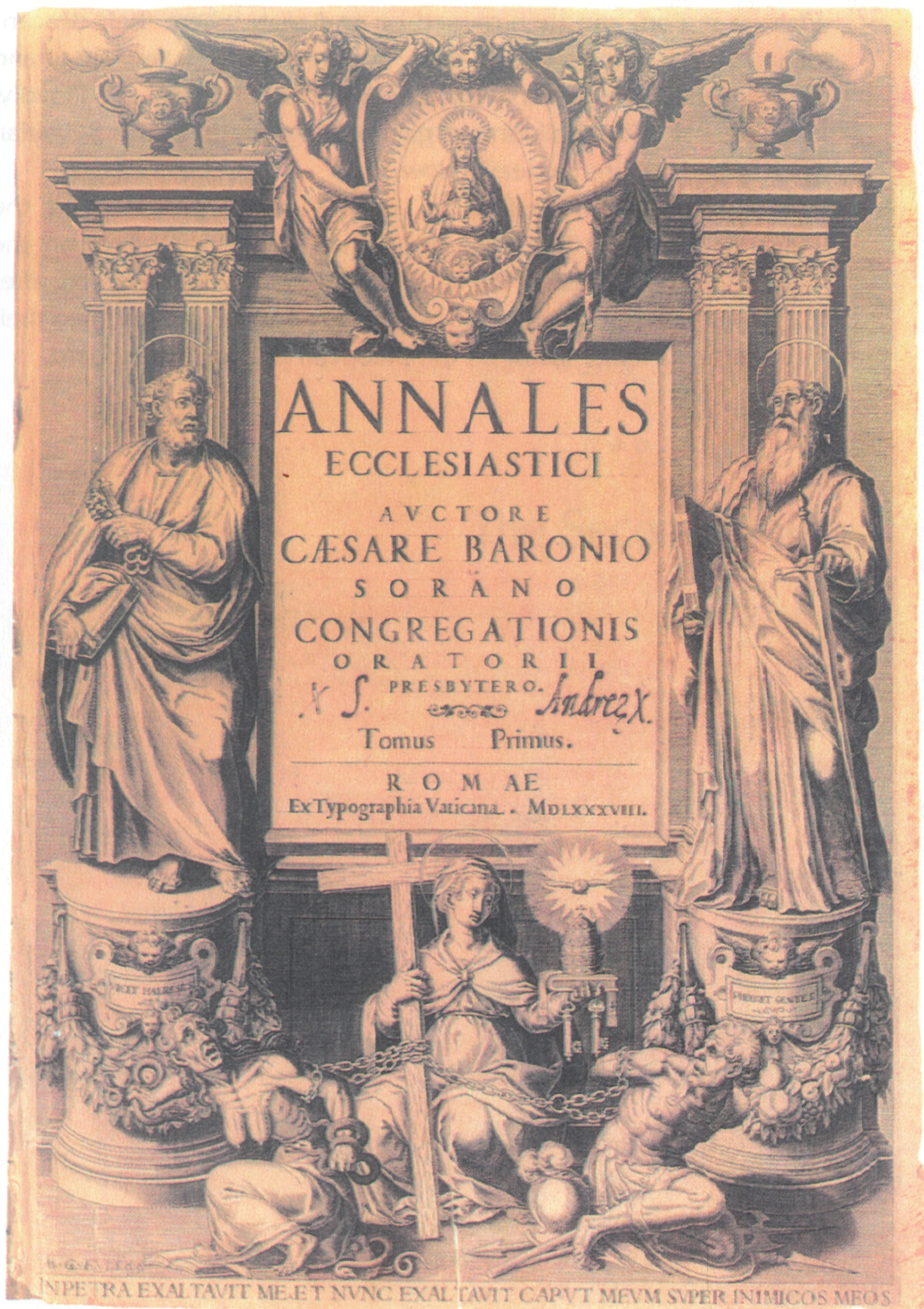
These were indeed Bulgarians of strong character. Through the borders of the restored Bulgarian bishoprics of Skopje, Preslav, Ohrid and Prishtina, they aimed at outlining the ethnic borders of the Bulgarians with the clear intention of turning them into state borders later on. They wrote *History of Bulgaria* 95 years before Paissiy wrote his one and made up the Bulgarian coat of arms 100 years before Zhefarovich did. Also they managed to cross out the column “Macedonia” from the Serbian Kingdom entry in the Vatican regal registers and made the Pope transfer it to the Bulgarian one. Meanwhile, they placed Vlashko and Moldova under their church jurisdiction, as the two belonged to Bulgaria as well. So far the Papacy had gone along with their wishes and willingly satisfied all their demands favouring the Bulgarian national interests. Yet in 1644 the so-called Cretan war broke out between Venice and the Turkish Empire. In practice, this was a war of the whole Western Europe against Islam. The Pope ordered that the Bulgarian bishops be downgraded. During the same year the leader of the Bulgarian Catholics Peter Bogdan set up a

revolutionary organisation involving not only the Catholics in north-western Bulgaria, but also Orthodox Bulgarians. Peter Bogdan's plan was that the Bulgarians should rise only if there was direct military support by a big Christian country. Peter Parchevich, archbishop of Martsinanople, left for Europe in search of military and political allies in Poland, Ukraine, Austria and Venice. Within the territories of the Turkish Empire Bogdan, Stanislavov and Soimirovich attracted Serbian, Greek and Ohrid patriarchs to the conspiracy. Within the 1649–1656 period Bogdan repeatedly wrote that it was an ordeal for him to deter the population from uprising. Feeling disquiet, the Vatican dismissed Peter Parchevich and Phillip Stanislavovich from their posts. Peter Bogdan preserved his position and consequently managed to reinstate his fellows to their previous posts after a long and heated correspondence with the Vatican.

Unfortunately, Venice suffered defeat in 1669. The rebels stashed their weapons away.

Over the next two years Catholicism in Bulgaria reached its heyday. The numbers of Bulgarian Catholics increased up to several scores of thousands. Apart from those in Plovdiv, Chiprovtsi and Nikopol, Bulgarian Catholic communities appeared in almost all big Bulgarian towns. Schools and Churches were opened and Bulgarian literature was printed. In 1674 the patriarchs of Bulgarian Catholicism Bogdan, Parchevich and Stanislavov died within a couple of months. However, their work was taken over by devout followers.

Yet, there came the disaster in 1688. As a result of the war between the Turkish Empire and the Holy League (Venice, Austria, Poland and Russia), which had broken out in 1683, the Bulgarian Catholics rose in rebellion, attracting thousands of Orthodox Bulgarians to their ranks. The so-called Chiprovtsi uprising was crushed with all the cruelty typical of the epoch. Thousands of Bulgarian Catholics faced their death, while others were captured and enslaved. Their settlements were reduced to ashes and destroyed. Some 3,000 people succeeded in emigrating to the



Church Annals – historical book by Cardinal Baronius, printed in 1588 and containing valuable data about Bulgarian history

Vlashko region, and then moved on to Banat, where their descendants have stayed to live to date. In Bulgaria only a few small and poor Catholic villages survived in the regions of Nikopol and Plovdiv. The chances of Catholicism to gain solid grounds in the Bulgarian society had suffered a heavy blow.

Yet, the Vatican's efforts to establish solid presence on the Bulgarian lands in the 17th century had a positive effect on the Bulgarian national cause. The name of Bulgaria came to the fore after a 200-year-long oblivion, when our country and people resumed their functions as a major factor on the European political chessboard.

Chapter Five

The Second Unit

In Mid-Nineteenth Century the Bulgarian lands (then under the rule of the Ottoman Empire) witnessed some developments that again led to a Union between the Vatican and part of the Orthodox Bulgarians.

As it is well-known, all Mediaeval Bulgarian State Formations fell under the rule of the Ottoman Empire between 1371 and 1396. The Bulgarian Patriarchate was dismissed and all its diocesan districts went under the control of the Constantinople Patriarchate. The Bulgarian Autocephalous Archbishopric at the town of Ohrid was also dissolved in 1767. From that year onwards all the Bulgarian Christians within the borders of the Ottoman Empire were under the guidance and control of the Constantinople Ecumenical Patriarchate.

In the 30s of the Nineteenth Century the small Kingdom of Greece, having appeared on the map of Europe as late as 1829, put forward the idea of a territorial extension of its borders within the boundaries of the Byzantine Empire – from the Mediterranean up to the Danube River. They conceived of this as their own national doctrine. The policy of Hellenisation of the population of these lands was actively supported and carried out by the Constantinople Ecumenical Patriarchate as well, and that naturally triggered a counter-reaction among the Bulgarians, who started petitioning for an independent Bulgarian Orthodox Church. That gave the start to a dramatic struggle, which respectively led to chasing away the Greek bishops and priests from the Bulgarian dioceses in Macedonia, Thrace and Moesia. The culmination came on Easter Day service, held at the St. Stephan Bulgarian Church in Constantinople in 1860, when the Bulgarian Metropolitan Bishops did not mention the name of the Ecumenical Patriarch in their liturgical service. According to the Church Canon, this meant that the Bulgarian Christians had refused to recognize the supremacy of the Ecumenical Patriarch.

However, the Turkish Sultan did not issue a Ferman (a Decree) of recognition and inauguration of an independent Bulgarian Church.

The Bulgarians had no strong political supporter of their cause in those years. The Russian Emperor, who was the tacit patron and defender of all Christians within the Ottoman Empire, believed all Christians should stay united, so he was against splitting the Christian churches into separate units. Consequently, he let the Sultan know he was supporting the position of the Constantinople Ecumenical Patriarchate. The three Bulgarian Metropolitan Bishops were arrested and exiled.

Under these circumstances, a group of Bulgarian public leaders, firmly convinced of the necessity of separation from the Constantinople Ecumenical Patriarchate and seeking independence of the Bulgarian

IL
REGNO
DE GLI SLAVI
HOGGI CORROTTAMENTE
DETTI SCHIAVONI.
HISTORIA
DI DON MAVRO ORBINI RAVSEO
ABBATE MELITENSE.

Nella quale si vede l'Origine quasi di tutti i Popoli, che furono della Lingua SLAVA, con molte, & varie guerre, che fecero in Europa, Asia, & Africa; il progresso dell'Imperio loro, l'antico culto, & il tempo della loro conversione al Christianesimo.

E in particolare veggonsi i successi de' Rè, che anticamente dominarono in DALMATIA, CROATIA, BOSNA, SERVIA, RASSIA, & BVLGARIA.



XXVII-
D-5-

J N P E S A R O,

Appresso Girolamo Concordia. Con licenza de' Superiori.
M. DCI

Въсхвалю воедннго вошца всгдъ ржѣте людіи ворящѣ бжзвѣ

δαὶ διδοῦν τὰ καὶ ἡ
 χυμὸν ποιούμενοι
 τοῦ πασι λόγου λόγῳ
 τῶν δὲ πρὸς θέραι
 πείσας φερόμεται
 Διὰ φερόμεται δὲ
 μέντοι καὶ διὰ τοῦ
 το πολλοῖς τῶν τῶν
 μερῶν δικῆν ὁ παρὲν
 ρημὸν τῶν τῶν παρὲν
 τῶν δὲ τῶν τῶν
 ὅν τῶν τῶν τῶν
 Διὰ τῶν τῶν τῶν
 δὲ τῶν τῶν τῶν
 χορὸν τῶν τῶν τῶν
 ὅν τῶν τῶν τῶν
 ὅν τῶν τῶν τῶν
 κεῖ τῶν τῶν τῶν
 μακαρίων τῶν τῶν
 κήρυττον τῶν τῶν
 φῶν τῶν τῶν τῶν

Church, applied for a Uniat with the Vatican, exactly as Tsar Caloyan had done some 650 years before them.

The originator of the idea was the undoubtedly talented publicist, Draghan Tsankov. He had established connections with several Catholic Orders that had been working within the Bulgarian territories, and as early as 1855 had secretly become a Catholic himself. Supported by funds of the Catholic Order of Lazarus, in 1859 he began publishing the *Bulgaria* newspaper. The paper quickly won the Bulgarian public with the highly patriotic position of its contributors and its passionate disclosures, exposing the anti-Bulgarian policies of the Constantinople Ecumenical Patriarchate. As a solution, naturally, Draghan Tsankov kept on pointing to a Uniat with the Vatican. The Russian consuls noted in their reports they were seriously worried that the newspaper of Draghan Tsankov had been quite well received by the Bulgarian population.

The disappointment of the pending recognition of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, which had declared independence on 3 April, 1860, as well as the exile imposed on the three Metropolitan Bishops guided thousands of Bulgarians towards the alternative suggested by Draghan Tsankov. Tens of thousands of Bulgarians from all over the country, as well as entire dioceses and parishes declared they were ready to enter into a Uniat with the Vatican.

So, on 18 December, 1860, in Constantinople, Draghan Tsankov and his supporters, together with the Papal Archbishop Brunonius signed a Writ allowing the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to enter into a Uniat with the Vatican. Under the pressure of France, the Turkish Sultan declared he was going to recognize the new Bulgarian Church. Joseph Sokolsky, a man from the town of Gabrovo, was ordained as the new Bulgarian Archbishop by His Holiness Pius IX at a solemn ceremony at the Vatican. The newly-spawned Head of the Bulgarian Church was 80 years old, and he had spent almost half of his life as a hayduk, hiding in the deep forests of the Balkan Range. At the brief party after the ceremony of being ordained Archbishop, the old hayduk entertained His Holiness Pius IX with an amusing account of his feats for nearly two hours. Meanwhile, the interpreter prudentially translated a highly watered version, mostly related to the building and construction of the Sokolski Monastery up the Gabrovo Balkan Range.

The Uniat Church of Bulgaria achieved remarkable success and an unbelievable growth within the next few months. Thousands of Bulgarians at the towns of Plovdiv, Bitolya, Velles, Vidin, Stroumitsa, Turnovo, Stara Zaghora, Shoumen, Skopje, Vodden, Koukoush, Malko Turnovo, Ivailovgrad and Constantinople joined the Uniat Church. They had undoubtedly been attracted by the clauses of the Agreement providing for church service and

ministries in the Bulgarian language, as well as for the preservation of the Orthodox ritual. It was estimated that by the middle of 1861 about 300 000 Bulgarians, i.e. about ten percent of the Bulgarian Christians had recognized the Holy Father as their supreme spiritual and administrative leader.

The Uniat had been interpreted by the Great Powers of Europe as a predominantly political act. The West believed the Uniat was going to put an end to the strong attachment of Russia to Bulgaria. "The Uniat Church would provide a much stronger wall against the Russian armies," wrote the French Ambassador to Constantinople, "than the new bastions of the Shoumen Fortress that are being built at present." It seems Russia must have been of the same opinion for the Russian Intelligence Service urgently began planning an operation of kidnapping the Right Reverend Archbishop Joseph Sokolsky. The old man loved having long walks with his friend Petko Slaveykov, the prominent Bulgarian writer, poet and public figure. So Count Lobanoff suggested one day that the poet should make a small detour of the usual route of their walk, and take the Archbishop along one of the Constantinople piers, where a Russian cargo ship had berthed. A detachment of special forces was ready to grab His Eminence. For the small detour, Count Lobanoff offered 5 000 roubles to the poet. "The integrity of an intelligent Bulgarian is not for sale at the ridiculous price of 5 000 roubles!", Slaveykov is said to have replied indignantly. "Ah, well then," Count Lobanoff resignedly uttered, "It will be 10 000 roubles then." So Archbishop Sokolsky was kidnapped and exiled to the Kiev-Petchora Laura, wherefrom he later on sent a letter declaring his resignation from the Uniat with the Vatican. But the case had almost no influence upon the strong movement for the Uniat. Russia must have realised she had to change her policies toward the demands for an independent Bulgarian Church. Already under a strong Russian pressure, the Ottoman Sultan was forced to sign a Ferman (a Decree) in 1870, authorising the inauguration of a Bulgarian Exarchate.

Now that was an act that dealt a serious blow to the Uniat Church. As fast as it had amassed thousands of adepts before, it now lost them at almost the same accelerated rate. Hundreds of thousands of Uniats passed over to the structures of the independent Bulgarian Orthodox Church. And yet several thousands of Uniats remained faithful to the Holy Father. Their offspring (about 20 000 people) live in Bulgaria nowadays, as well as in FIROM (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

After the liberation of Bulgaria in 1878, the relations between the Vatican and Bulgaria were regulated at the level of two independent states. The Bulgarian Constitution until 1944 had stipulated the Orthodox Church

Reverendo Padre.

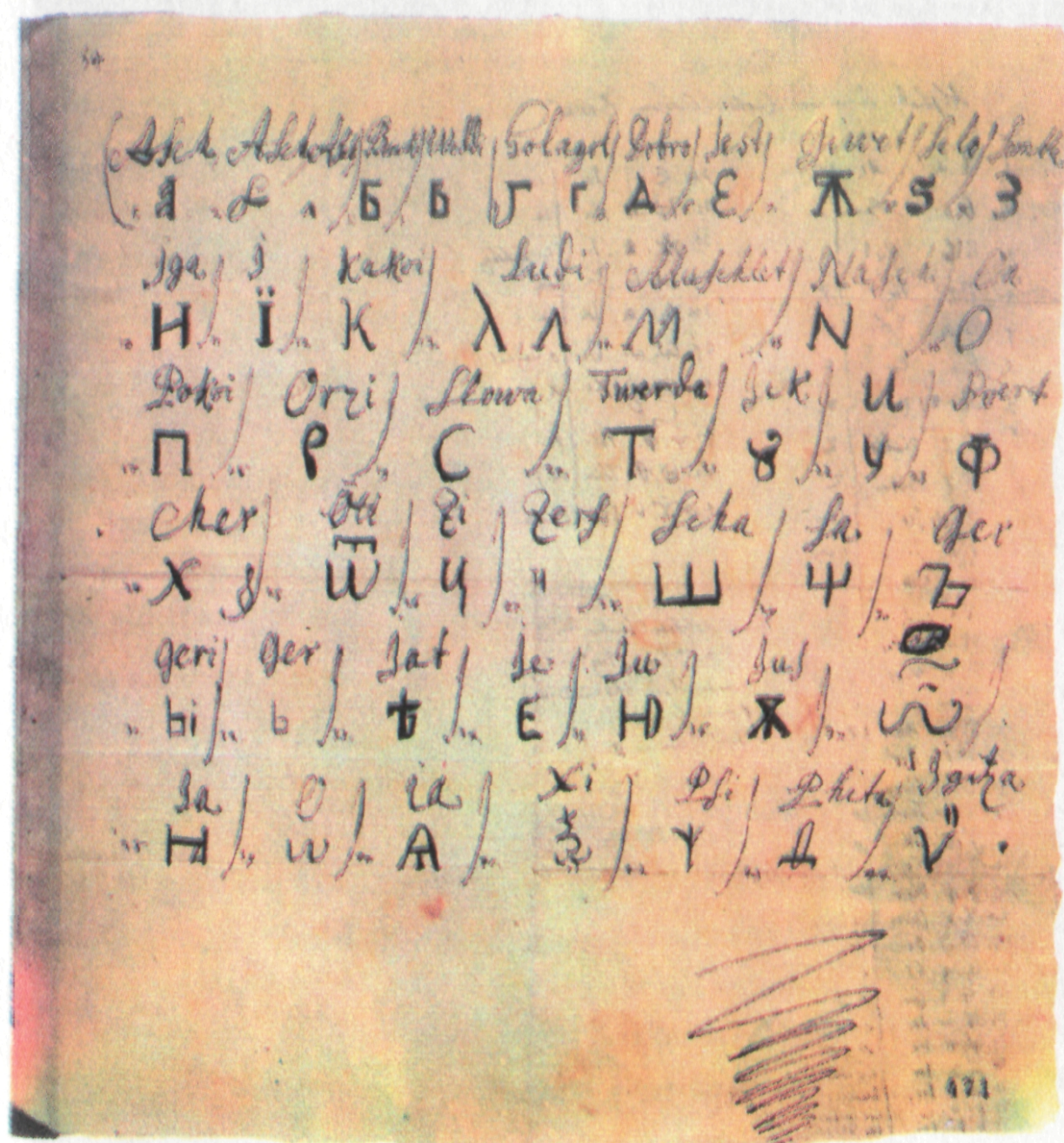
Hauendo bisogno di uo mandar alla santa Sede Aplica, prego ui padre Fra Paulo Cust^{de} che pigliate questo charico di far questo uaggio uisitare L^{ina} Ap^lorum, e fare altri nel negotij appresso S^{ta} Sed^e ordinatili da me, al mio loco, non potendo io p^{re} adesso far questo uaggio per molti impedimenti et occorrenze che giornalmente accadono qui tra questi infedeli, come sa ogniuno benissimo. Et attenda quanto prima spedira li negotij di ritornare, e con questo la raccomando a tutti Prelati della S^{ta} Sed^e Aplica, tanto alli Ill^{mi} Cardinali, quanto alli R^{mi} Mons^{ri} Vescovi, & altre Ecclesiastiche persone che ui siano fauoreuoli e pietosi, in ogni uita occorrenza in questo uostro uaggio tanto lungo. Ess^{to} con tutti questi che si trouino in queste parti catholici, restaranno obligati pregare Sig: Iddio p^{er} loro. e Dio con uoi, & recordateui pregar il Sig: per noi — — —
Dat. in Chiprouaz A di 27. Luglio 1626.

Fra Ch^{ris} Marinn^o Vescovo di Sofia



as the formally recognized State Religion of Bulgaria, yet without setting any limitations or restrictions to any other religious denominations. The Bulgarian Catholics and Uniats, however, were dealt a serious blow in the very first years of the Communist rule established in 1944. In the early 50s of the Twentieth Century almost all Roman Catholic priests were arrested and charged with espionage. Four of them, among them Father Bosilkov, who has been beatified by Pope John-Paul II, were shot and killed, the others – given long prison sentences. These events seriously disrupted the religious life of all Bulgarian Catholics and Uniats alike. A comparative thawing occurred as late as the end of the 70s of the Twentieth Century, when the Communist Rule underwent a certain liberalisation.

After the democratic changes in Bulgaria in 1989, our diplomatic relations with the Vatican have been restored.



Abecedario in different languages, including Bulgarian, Cod. Borg. Lat. f 471

Nicopolitana

Die 26 Maj 1648.

212

Caro Em^{mo} & Ill^{mo} Principi Frederico - et S. R. E. Cancell.
Conclio nuntio meo & Secretario
In V. D. Philippo Morisio promoueri ad
Cathedram Nicopolis ad Danubium & Thumae
in Bulgaria Contra quosunque

Examinatus fuit Rong in Palatio S. Marci
et in statijs C. S. M. D. Lucas Andrei
fil. g. Pauli de Cipronatia diocesis
Niopolitane prope Danubij flum.
in Bulgaria testis sacerdos etatis
annos. 35. civiter testis sui delato
durant. de rebus dictis in manib. C.
pt. sacris peravit, d. et deponit prout
infra vlt.

Ad 1. R. S. So che Antonio cognosce l'inf.
Filippo Santas con occasione che sono
quasi dell'istessa patria, et li abbiamo in-
viato insieme, per sono vinticinque anni
che lo cognosce, non gli sono parente
in grado alcuno, non troppo fam. non
emulo, né odioso.
Ad 2. R. S. So che il T. Don Filippo è nato in

216

Хочу и създравити те и твои и чужди и близки и далечни
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Bozhidar Dimitrov

BULGARIA AND THE VATICAN

English Version

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THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
CATHOLIC CHURCH AT ST. ARCHANGEL MICHAEL PARISH,
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